PZ 3
.C3158

FT MEADE
GenColl

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE

CAVERN

OF

STROZZI.

A NOVEL.

"The fairest flow'r in Nature's garden plac'd
"Is beaut'ous woman, when with virtue grac'd;
"But when fierce passions rule the female mind,
"No laws controul, no human dictates bind:
"On wild desires her franctic love is built,—
"Crime follows crime, till murder crowns her guilt."

PRINTED FOR BOOKSELLERS.

1812.

AZ3
C3158

8-1-121
CL

THE

CAVERN

OF

STROZZI.

IT is near three months since I was at Venice. After having visited whatever was worthy of curiosity in that great city, I was preparing to quit it, when an unforeseen and extraordinary incident prolonged my stay. One morning, as I was exploring the spacious rooms of the library of St. Mark, my eyes were by chance attracted towards a large folio volume, with this title on the back of it—*A Description of the Cavern of Strozzi.* Expecting, by the perusal of the work to find something that might be applicable to one I was composing, upon the singular productions of Nature in the mineral reign, I went and requested the librarian to give me the book: as soon as I had it in my hands I retired to one of the window-seats, to peruse it the more at my ease.

I had already read a few of the first pages, without receiving any great satisfaction ; at the ninth page I was going to throw down the book ; when on turning the leaf I thought I perceived transparent characters in the paper, as the light reflected upon it. Curious of ascertaining what they expressed, I raised the book to the window and placed the leaf that had interested my curiosity before it, and between the first thirteen lines, which commenced the history of the petrifactions of the Cavern of Strozzi, I distinctly read these words, although Gothic characters had been employed to trace them :

" *The wonders which nature has collected together in the Cavern of Strozzi are less surprising than the delirium of those passions which are there exhibited in all their horror.*"

There was something so enigmatical in these lines, and the manner in which I had discovered them was so mysterious, that I could not restrain the emotions they produced. I confess my astonishment was increased when, upon carefully examining the leaves, I found the same inscription repeated on every thirteenth. I am not in the least superstitious, yet this number to which human weakness attaches a kind of fatal influence, did not seem to me to have been the effect of chance ; therefore the prejudice which actuated the writer in using it, rendered the in-

scription still more surprising. I copied it with a pencil upon a card : I did not forget to note down the title of the work, the name of the bookseller who had published it, the place and year it had been printed, the numbers of the fatal pages on which the inscription had been interlined ; I also remarked the shelf of the library on which the volume was placed ; and then, returning it to the librarian, I asked him, affecting as much indifference as I possessed curiosity, whether he could inform me of the name of the author of the work. The good Friar (for they are of the order of Dominicans who have the charge of the library of St. Mark) answered in the negative ; but he presumed it was some one who attentively examined the rare productions of the Cavern of Strozzi. To me who had not read much of the contents of the book, this answer might have conveyed a double meaning ; but I perceived, by the rest of the discourse, that he was less informed on the subject than myself ; therefore, taking leave of him, I went to indulge in those reflections this event had suggested.

Having retired to one of the solitary walks in the garden belonging to the library of St. Mark, I read the mysterious lines again and again ; but the more I meditated, the less could I discover their meaning ; and though they were written in Gothic characters, yet as the book was of a recent date, these lines must evidently be so too. Then I said to

myself, " Of what passions can a dark and " insolated Cavern be the theatre ? Even sup- " posing murders to have been meditated or " committed there, how can it now exhibit a " representation of horrors that are past ?— " Besides, the author of the inscription has " not pointed out the period to which he re- " fers.——It was possible some hermit, wea- " ried of the follies of youth, and the victim " of his own passions, had inhabited the Cav- " ern.—But did he still reside there ?—Who " was he ?—He must have been heard of at " Venice." Such were the questions I had to resolve—such the doubts to clear up.

Night surprised me in the midst of my meditations, which were the more painful as I had no clue to direct them ; but in whatever way I considered the subject, my mind was still embarrassed, and at a loss to form any reasonable conjecture.

Neither the dead silence of the night, nor the depth of my reflections, afforded me any assistance in my researches. When day appeared, I went to every bookseller in Venice, to enquire for the Description of the Cavern of Strozzi ; but among thirty I only found three who had ever heard of the book, and only one who could procure it for me. I bought this single copy, and shut myself up in my study, to discover the sense of the oracle which appeared so mysterious. My hopes were deceived ; it was in vain I turned to every thirteenth leaf; I found none of the

transparent characters, and was obliged to refer again to my card.

And these obstacles, instead of stifling my curiosity rendered it more active. I have often traversed miles to gather remarkable plants, or discover the rare productions of nature ; but I would travel to the remotest parts of the globe, if by so doing I could discover a new region in the heart of man, or develope a secret fold in which some new passion was concealed.

The leaves of the hieroglyphic volume which I compared to those of the Sybil, promised me this satisfaction ; and I was anxious not to neglect an opportunity which might never again present itself.

I informed myself respecting the cavern of Strozzi : I learned that it was situated in a small island of the same name in the Adriatic Gulph, to the north of Venice, about the distance of five miles ; had it been an hundred I should have gone. The next day I bargained with a gondolier, and having provided myself with arms and some provisions, I embarked at sunset.

The nature of this recital does not allow me to interrupt it, to describe the magnificent effect of that beautiful planet which was slowly sinking into the tranquil wave gilded by its rays, ; nor is my hasty pen worthy so grand a picture ; but I cannot avoid recommending to those who are desirous of enjoying such a scene, to figure to themselves the

infinite number of barks and gondolas which at that moment covered the sea, and whose floating streamers seemed to reflect, by the pleasing variety of their colurs, the glowing tints which are painted in the heavens.

After a passage of an hour and a quarter we anchored in a little creek of the island, when the gondoliers after having put me on shore, and received my orders to return at the same hour next day, wished me a good night, and rode off.

I had landed on the side nearest the Cavern, and had not proceeded two hundred paces, when from the difference of the soil on which I stood, and the dampness of the air, I conjectured I was near it. To the rich and luxuriant fields I had quitted, succeeded barren heaths and arid sands. My sight, which at first had been gratified by the appearance of poplars and palm-trees, whose foliage, lightly waving, presented a moving shadow, now saddened at the mournful aspect of the yew and weeping willow. I soon found myself sensibly descending, and in a few minutes was at the mouth of the Cavern. Rugged and steep rocks obstructed the entrance, and between their cavities were planted gloomy cypresses. A sort of brownish moss grew about the rocks; whose white summits formed a strong contrast with the dull aspect of surrounding nature, and rendered the prospect still more dismal. The expiring rays of the sun, which reflected on

them, coloured their extremest points ; but the faint tint they bestowed, instead of enlivening the scene, added to its horror. Never was my soul so harrowed as when contemplating this dreadful picture. It was in vain I looked round me ; the sun had disappeared and I seemed as though plunged into an immense tunnel, the sides of which, thick sown with pointed flints, and trees of mournful hue, announced nought but despair and death.

"Alas !" I exclaimed involuntarily, as if transported by one of those rapid emotions which a soul violently agitated cannot command—"Alas ! how, in such a desert, can a man be a slave of passions ?—Is it here they reign with unbounded sway ?—What ! where nature seems extinct, can the passions still exist ? Where is the soul intrepid enough not to be intimidated at this scene ?—What flame, however devouring, but this place must extinguish ?—Oh passions ! wild ungovernable passions ! if ye disturb these rocks, what lonely cottage can ye leave in peace ?"

The day, or rather the evening glided insensibly away, and was replaced by the pale and trembling light of the moon. This circumstance still added to the horror of the situation ; the gigantic forms of the rocks became more hideous, and the immense shadows they projected froze my soul with terror. On a sudden I figured to my imagination that this dreadful Cavern had been stain-

ed with the blood of some victim; and from the midst of a large and dark opening, which seemed like the jaws of death threatening me, I thought I beheld pale phantoms flitting along: doubtless it was nothing more than an illusion. Reason calmed the sallies of my disturbed imagination, and I proceeded in search of some place of security where I might pass the night.

I explored the cavern a considerable time; during which I almost repented having attempted so hazardous an adventure. At length, having found a spot shaded by a willow, I seated myself, examined my pistols, which I found in good order, took a little refreshment, drew my sword, and wrapping myself in my cloak, I lay down, in the hope of enjoying the sweets of sleep.

I had been in this position about half an hour, and had began to doze, when an hollow and distant murmur drew my attention. I pushed back the hood of my cloak, with which I had covered my head, placed myself on my seat and listened with the most silent attention. The noise which at first seemed as if approaching me, suddenly ceased, and for some minutes I heard no more; but it soon became more distinct. By the sound, I thought it was produced by chains dragging along under the vaults of the Cavern; and their horrid clanking appeared to advance nearer and nearer: presently a part of the rock, which formed an entrance to a more

secret part of the Cavern, was removed with a noise that made the whole place resound, and I saw a tall figure clad in white and chained, led out by another, who appeared somewhat shorter. After several windings, during which the two spectres preserved a profound silence, they changed their direction, and were proceeding towards the spot where I was. I had just time to rise, seize my arms, and retreat behind the willow, whose aged trunk was sufficiently large to have concealed three persons. I was in the shade and consequently my motions were not discovered. The figure in white, and the one who held it enchained, arrived at the spot I had just quitted; and the former having seated himself, the other fastened the chain of his companion, or rather his prisoner, to a ring placed in the rock, which I had not perceived; he then withdrew to a short distance, pulled out a steel, struck it, lighted a pipe, muttered a few oaths, and began to smoke.

After a mournful silence of ten or twelve minutes, which was only interrupted by the sighs of the personage who was seated, the latter addressed to one who appeared to be his keeper :—

" Ricardo," said he, " what's the hour ?"

" Past midnight," replied the other surlily.

" Midnight ! exclaimed the prisoner, uttering a heavy sigh—" Alas ! all hours are

to me equal, for they are all equally attended with grief;—must I be condemned to die daily, and am I prevented ridding myself of a loathsome life?"

"S'death!" said Ricardo,—"it depends only on yourself to render your life agreeable: Your obstinacy causes all your miseries; you might be happy if you were complying."

"Great God!" replied the prisoner, "if I can purchase liberty only at the price of honour, I prefer dying with her I love to living with her I detest."

"Sensible determination," replied the goaler; "to detest a charming woman, and dote upon a loathsome carcase."

"Ricardo," said the other, in an accent mingled with grief and indignation, "you are placed here to guard me, not to give me advice.—Is it not enough you tyrannize over my person, but must you also be master of my thoughts!"

Ricardo vented an oath, and was silent. The prisoner sighed, and leaning his head upon his hands, seemed to weep.

For myself, struck as I was with the scene I beheld, and the mysterious words I had heard, I thought the whole a dream.

Ricardo who had finished smoking his pipe, amused himself by climbing to a part of the rock of steep ascent; and when he was at a sufficient distance not to hear me, I thought I would venture to utter a few consoling words that might afford a ray of hope

to the wretched prisoner; but that I might not startle him, I sung a few plaintive notes in a very low voice. The unexpected sounds excited his attention: surprise and fear forced an involuntary exclamation from him, which however the gaoler did not hear. Conceiving his first alarm had subsided, I softly sung the first couplet of the following stanza, which perfectly accorded with his situation.

Oh thou, the victim of sad care and grief!
Who liv'st immur'd in cavern here forlorn,
The hand is near that means to bring relief,
And heal those mis'ries thou so long hast borne,

Thy sorrows cease, no more thy lot bewail;
Of happiness man ne'er can be bereft,
Howe'er adversity with woes assail,
While Hope, that soother of the soul is left.

Reflect how many by a tyrant's power,
Like thee, deplore the dungeon's gloomy night,
Till gracious Heav'n, at the appointed hour,
The tyrant strikes, and brings his crimes to light;

Oft days of pleasure follow nights of pain,
And thou may'st wake to happiness and joy;
Then let sweet hope thy sinking soul sustain,
For guilt alone can soothing hope destroy.

The prisoner was on the point of answering—he was preparing his voice, when Ricardo, wearied of his amusement, descended from the crag of the rock, and approached him, saying in the most brutal manner, "come let us return."

"Tomorrow then," cried the prisoner, as he was leaving the willow that concealed me.

" To-morrow," replied I.

" The devil !" said Ricardo, " did I not hear some one speak ?"

" It was the echo," answered the prisoner, " which repeated my words—to-motrow."

Ricardo contented himself with saying—he had not before observed the echo ; and having untied the chain of his victim, they returned into the Cavern.

Left alone, and abandoned to my reflections, I recalled every circumstance of the scene I had beheld ; I compared them together in the order in which they had appeared with the words I had extracted from the book at the library. I presumed that the unhappy wretch who was confined in the Cavern of Strozzi was the victim of the passion of some powerful lady, to whose desires he refused to yield. " But why should he have said he preferred dying with her he loved to living with her he detested ?—Perhaps his mistress was a prisoner as well as himself, and the wretched pair were both immured in this dreadful Cavern.---Why talk of dying with her ?--Was it intended to sacrifice them ?"--Again, " What could Ricardo mean by the words " Cherish a loathsome carcase ?"

All these thoughts, and a crowd of others floated on my brain. As soon as I had solved one question, some objection, which I had not foreseen, plunged me in doubt. The night and part of the day passed in this man-

ner ; a thousand schemes entered my imagination :—sometimes yielding to a cowardly fear, I thought of flying for ever from this scene of horror and danger : sometimes animated by a more noble sentiment, I determined to inform the holy inquisitors of what I had seen. Evening had arrived, and I had adopted no fixed resolution. I ran towards the shore :—my gondola appeared ; but I desired the gondolier to return next day, pretending (what indeed was but too true) that the singularities and wonders of the Cavern required more than a day to examine them thoroughly.

The day had quite departed ; night had veiled the earth, and the moon shed her faint and glimmering rays over a sea of clouds ; a southerly wind, which blew from Venice, made me distinctly hear the hours strike. Still concealed behind the old willow, I counted eleven without having perceived any thing. At length, a few minutes before midnight, the entrance to the inmost Cavern was unloosed, and the prisoner came forward, followed by the brutal Ricardo. Both placed themselves on the rock near the willow. Ricardo chained his victim as before, lighted his pipe, and walked to a short distance. I repeated, in a low voice, the stanza I sung yesterday, which the prisoner listened to with attention ; then cautiously extending part of my body towards him, keeping the other concealed behind the tree, I said to him, "Are

you acquainted with a certain book in the library of St. Mark?"

He started—"I see," said he, "you have read the thirteenth pages; but I am too much observed to speak: if you can feel for my misfortunes, act as this letter directs you; and when you shall have read it, pursue the dictates of your own heart."

I was about to reply, but the return of Ricardo only gave me time to put forth my hand, and take the letter the prisoner presented. I then again concealed myself. Ricardo repeated the same circumstances I have described to have taken place yesterday: and the prisoner, as he was going away, turned his head towards the place where I was, and sung these words ina a melancholy tone of voice:

"Who aids the cause of innocence oppress'd
"Is by the act alone supremely bless'd;
"No greater rapture man on earth can know,
"Than that of feeling and relieving woe."

The moon was not sufficiently clear to enable me to read the letter he had given me, and it would have been imprudent to have struck a light; I therefore left the Cavern, and waited on the sea shore the return of the day. But as I had passed the preceding night without sleep, was wearied by the ideas this extraordinary adventure had excited, and was lulled by the monotonous sound of the billows beneath me, I yielded to these various impulses, and fell into a profound sleep.

It was broad day-light when I awoke. The

fatigue I had undergone, the sleep I had enjoyed, added to the sharp and nitrous air from the sea, had excited the cravings of hunger in an extreme degree; but I had but little provision left; therefore I could only assuage without satisfying it.

I saw, with some uneasiness, that in order to enable myself to explore the end of this adventure, it was necessary I should return to Venice; and my regret was increased when I read the prisoner's letter.—It was to this effect:

"What you have already seen of my misfortunes, dreadful as they may have appeared to you, can give you no idea of those of which you are still ignorant. If you are desirous of becoming acquainted with them, and of rescuing the most miserable of men, repair to-morrow about midnight to the sea shore, near the bay which is opposite to Venice; a bark will land there; follow those whom you see leave it, without, if possible, being perceived by them; observe them, and act as honour and pity dictates."

It is easy to imagine what my impatience was during the rest of the day—an impatience which was encreased by the calls of hunger. I traversed the island, but it only presented singular petrifactions, and spars of every form and colour—things which at any other time I should have felt a lively interest in, but which then only augmented my hunger, my impatience, and my fatigue,

This tedious day at length closed.—The sun quitted the horizon, and my faithful gondolier did not fail to make his appearance. We soon crossed the strait that separated us from Venice.—When I had arrived at that city, I only delayed the necessary time to obtain a fresh supply of provisions, and in half an hour after returned to the island of Strozzi.

In order the better to follow the instructions contained in the prisoner's letter, I concealed myself behind a rising ground near the bay, where, by raising my head, I could discover the sea. I remained a full hour in this position. Towards midnight, as I judged by the moon, which had just risen, (for the wind having changed, I could not hear the sound of the clocks at Venice) the noise of oars, which agitated the calm billows, announced the arrival of the bark. It soon touched ground, and five persons came silently from it: one of them fastened it to the shore, a second uncovered a dark lanthern, with which he appeared to examine the place round him, and all of them proceeded towards the Cavern.

Leaving the retreat in which I had concealed myself, I followed them: neither of them spoke, but walked with slow and solemn steps. The noise of their footsteps echoed round them, and the Cavern, which they were now near, repeated the sounds. What a scene!—what a situation!—A gloomy night scarce

rendered visible, by the faint light of the moon, a parched and barren soil, covered with briars ; a dreadful mass of rocks piled one upon another, and rearing their Colossal forms above the horizon ; a wide, dark, and horrid Cavern ; weeping willows ; mournful cypresses ; and, to add to these horrors, a dread silence which rendered the distant dashing of the billows and the blood-stained steps of the five murderers still more frightful.

They arrived at the Cavern. One of them struck a projection of the rock with the hilt of his poniard ; an instant after a hoarse voice from the inside of the Cavern cried, " *Treason.*" The five persons replied, " *Vengeance :*" and the entrance was opened after the three first had repeated the words " *Vengeance !—Vengeance !—Vengeance !*"

In the mean time, favoured by the darkness and the confusion which agitated the conspirators, I glided, unperceived, among them. The light of the lantern hardly extended two steps beyond him who held it, and were in such a winding and intricate path that we could only walk one abreast. It was consequently difficult, nay almost impossible, to have perceived me ; but if I had been discovered, and they had offered me any violence, I was provided with arms in good condition, and would have dearly sold my life. But the idea of being serviceable to an unhappy being, and a short and fervent prayer I addressed to Heaven, banished fear from

my soul: I only thought of justifying that confidence the oppressed had reposed in me.

Whilst I was actuated by this reflection, I felt a hand leaning on me, which from its smallness and softness, I judged to be a woman's. This hand, apparently heated by a fever, grasped mine with a convulsive motion, and pressing it to her heart, which beat with violent and unequal palpitations. I continued silent, when I heard a voice in soft accents, but evidently agitated, say to me, "Do you not feel how it beats?—it is rage—it is love."*

As we advanced, the Cavern seemed to enlarge itself. The glimmerings of light which at intervals shot from the lantern, reflected upon the roof and sides of the rock, whose crystalline productions sparkled with a thousand colours. We soon breathed a damp air, infected with pestilential vapours. I felt myself unwell, and remarked that three of those I accompanied were in a similar situation. The three others, I mean the gaoler, who had opened the entrance of the Cavern, he who carried the lantern, and she who had taken me by the hand, were in no ways effected.

At a little distance we descended some steps, rudely cut out in the rock; at the bottom of the last of them was a small door, which, upon being struck by him who went

* The inconsistency of the Lady's conduct can only be accounted for from the disordered and agitated state of her passions at the moment.

first, was immediately opened.—We entered: —the darkness did not permit me to distinguish the object; however, by the faint light that preceded us, I observed in one of the corners a figure dressed in white: it was the only object I could distinctly perceive; for the man who held the lantern having taken it to light a torch by, a gust of wind extinguished it, and we were left in utter darkness. I confess, whatever firmness I possessed I could not at that instant resist the impulse of terror.

The dread scene that surrounded me, the fearful silence preserved by my criminal companions, the horrid darkness, the damp dews of the Cavern—all these circumstances united convinced me I was among a set of murderers, whose dark deeds perhaps I was on the point of witnessing. I however recalled my troubled spirits, and resolved notwithstanding the numbers against me, to exert the courage of justice, which is ever an even match for guilt.

From an adjoining cavern, which seemed to be the gaoler's apartment, a lighted torch was brought: its glaring light presented me a spectacle which while I live I shall never forget. My hair stood erect with horror, and my blood curdled in my veins. Within a recess of the rock there lay chained a wretched victim, half naked, whom by his white covering, but more particularly by his sighs, I knew to be the prisoner I had before seen.

His hollow care-worn eyes, and his chained arms were mournfully turned towards an object, which at first I had not remarked; but which, I afterwards observed with horror, was the dead body of a female. Each of the five persons I had accompanied had a different attitude. Terror had discomposed the features of the three first, and upon the fourth was traced a stupid insensibility.--But how shall I describe the expression painted on the countenance of the person who had taken me by the hand, and whom as I had imagined, I soon perceived to be a woman?

Her hat, which had fallen from her head, discovered her flowing tresses of extraordinary beauty, her brows were knit, and displayed at once the fury of hatred, and the flames of love; her large blue eyes, which darted forth revenge, were moistened by the tears of pity; her respiration was loud and interrupted; and her whole frame exhibited marks of unusual disorder: every muscle of her countenance was contracted, and every fibre of her heart palpitated. Torn by contending passions, she wished to speak, but her thoughts found no utterance; her lips murmured a few unintelligible words; her whole soul was expressed in her looks; she by turns cast them with a tender softness on the prisoner, and with a malignant pleasure upon the dead body.

This painful situation could not continue long: a shower of tears put an end to it; then

approaching the prisoner as he lay,—" Antoni," said she, " you are silent : do you no longer hate me ? or, to add to my misery, are you become insensible ? Alas ! I have too much offended you to pretend to your love ; I have too severely punished you not to merit your hatred : detest me ; tell me you abhor me ; it is only by rending my wounds you can assuage them ; Oh Heaven ! he no longer hears me : it is for her," pointing to the body, " he preserves all the affections of his soul.—Though dead, and a prey to the worms, she has all his love ; and I, who have been so often praised for my beauty, am disdained, despised, unheeded ! Why am I not as she is ?—Why is she not as I am ?—I should then possess thy love, she thy hatred. Antoni ! Antoni ! knowest thou who I am ? I am thy mistress,—thy persecutor ! Take this hand, which wishes to join thine, and which thou hast hitherto rejected. Acknowledge it has revenged itself of thy contempt." At these words, raising the covering which partly concealed the body, she shewed its bosom, horribly stained with blood, and pierced with a large wound in which a poniard remained plunged ; then, with a malignant smile, she said, " Behold what I have done !—She adored you :—you preferred her to me ; with these hands I murdered her ! Why does she not awake, that I may destroy her again ? it is by her blood I would quench

the flame that consumes me.--How lovely she was when I plunged the dagger in her breast! What joy was it to see my rival suppliant at my feet, entreating life, and obtaining death. Do you not hate me? Man more ferocious than myself, who hath revealed to thee the secret how to punish me?

Her tears here began to flow, interrupted with bitter sighs, and she fell senseless into the arms of those who surrounded her. In the mean time the prisoner had not uttered a word. His looks were fixed, his eyes dry, and he appeared neither to observe nor comprehend any thing. By degrees his pitiless enemy recovered her senses: she approached Antoni with more tranquillity, and placed herself on his bed, with her back turned towards the body of her rival; and addressing the object of her love, "Antoni," said she, "I will not dissemble my crimes, nor the injuries I have done you: I have deprived you of a mistress you adored, and, by a refinement of cruelty, till now unheard of, have condemned you to die with grief near her sad remains. You detest me—you ought so to do, I cannot complain; nay, I should despise you if you hated me less. But every thing on earth has its limits; love becomes extinct, and hatred loses its violence. For myself, who have so cruelly offended you, I will put a period to my vengeance. Shall you who have suffered so much, not

lay aside your griefs?--Continue to mourn the loss of Zanette.—She lived but to love you--she died because you loved her--you owe her eternal regrets; but can you mourn her loss no where but in this tomb? Why resist my offers, and refuse to accept the conditions proposed to you?—Do you think it will be more intolerable to live within my arms, than to perish in those of one who no longer lives?--Is it more pleasing to breathe the air of a pestilential cavern, than to enjoy the delights of a palace?--Antoni you have offended me, and I am revenged upon you. You have, in your turn, revenged yourself on me. We are both young, amorous, and Italians: let us pardon a crime which results from circumstances, and perhaps the nature of the climate, and let a happy marriage restore us, if not to happiness at least to tranquility."

"Tranquility," replied Antoni, in mournful accents, "can never be our lot:—remorse will prey upon your heart,—regret will consume mine.—Leave me: I will never accept the hand still reeking with the blood of her I loved. Oh my dear Zazette!" he exclaimed, "I will be faithful to thy shade, and in the arms of Death will I seek a spouse."

Antoni was silent. The lady rose, and said something to those who accompanied her; then addresssing the prisoner, she added, "I leave you; your destiny is in your own hands.—In five days you shall see me

again ; when, if you disdain Olympia, your scorn shall not remain unpunished."

Antoni cast a look of contempt upon her. —Ricardo walked before with his torch.—I took care to be the last ; and seizing the hand of the wretched prisoner, said to him in a low tone of voice,—" In five days you shall be revenged."

I left the Cavern in a manner no less secret and unobserved than I had entered it. I afterwards seperated from Olympia and her retinue, who regained their bark ; and I passed the rest of the night and the following day in meditating the means of punishing guilt, and avenging innocence.

I began in some measure to unravel this scene of iniquity : what I had beheld afforded some clue to my conjectures. My mind began to comprehend the meaning of the mysterious lines of the library ; part of which had been explained by what I had heard from Antoni. Whatever obscurity remained in my mind with respect to this adventure I knew enough, I knew too much, not to foresee it would terminate in a tragical catastrophe, if I suffered it to remain hidden in the darkness of the cavern. There was no hope that the heart of Olympia, so long hardened, would at last relent : every thing was to be feared from so infamous a woman to whom guilt was pleasure. On the other hand admitting the possibility of an union between two individuals of such opposite

characters, it could only be at the expence of their mutual tranquillity, as well as in violation of every principle of morality By such an union the innocent Antoni would have been condemned to admit to his bed the murderer of his mistress ; and the guilty Olympia would receive the hand of Antoni as the price of blood for having destroyed her rival. Such a violation of the simple dictates of morality would necessarily excite between them an hatred the more violent, as it would be concealed ; and it was easy to determine what would be the fatal consequences of it. In order, therefore, to prevent the dangers of a refusal on the one hand, and the guilt of such an unnatural marriage on the other, I judged I had but one method to adopt.

The government of Venice has, from time immemorial, resided in the hands of the most illustrious families. To the nobles alone belong the exercise of the sovereign power, and those officers of state by which it is supported ; but in order to form a counterpoise to an authority which might degenerate into Tyranny, the Legislature has created a tribunal as august as terrible, whose office it is to preserve the balance between its power and aristocracy. This supreme tribunal, which is known by the name of the *Council of Ten*, because it is composed of that number of senators, unites the high function of protecting the Republic against the attempts of ambition, to the no less important one of detecting and punishing guilt.

A religious terror and profound mystery attend the operations of this state inquisition which, by its omnipotent majesty, equally strikes terror into the noble Doge and the humble citizen. There are none whose thoughts they do not discover, none whose actions they are ignorant of. By means of its faithful agents it obtains information of the most hidden secrets; it punishes concealed crimes. Its judgments are pronounced in darkness, and its executions are performed in silence, a man who is the object of its vengeance disappears from society as by enchantment and society is only informed of his crime by hearing of his condemnation.

The Ten never pardon; but though it is certain they are inflexible, they are not unjust: the blood they shed is always the impure blood which has communicated its corruption to society. It is forbidden, under the most heavy penalties, in any manner to speak of this tribunal: it no less punishes those who praise, than those who speak irreverently of it:—its commands enjoin only in silence. In a word, terror precedes it, mystery accompanies it, and death stalks in its rear.

It was to this council I resolved to denounce the facts I had witnessed; but they appeared to me of so particular a nature, that instead of adopting the common mode, which consists in throwing the accusation in the mouth of the brazen lions placed at the vestibule of the palace of the Ten, I determined to inform them personally.

In the evening I quitted the Cavern and the Island of Strozzi, resolved to return to it as the deliverer of innocence. But in order to obtain this object in a manner as easy as infallible, I the next day endeavoured to obtain some information respecting Olympia, and after various enquiries made by myself, and through the medium of my friends, the following is what I collected of that extraordinary woman.

Descended from the most illustrious Houses of Venice, and reckoning among her ancestors a long series of Doges and Senators, Signora Olympia Giustiniani received an education suitable to her birth, which early developed her character: a display of brilliant talents and rare attractions accompanied her earliest years, and she was cited as a model of perfection, at an age when others are scarce out of their infancy. It would have been difficult to have found a more beautiful and noble countenance, a more dignified air, or manners more ingenuous, and at the same time more commanding: she possessed the charms of Venus, and the dignity of Juno. At eleven years of age she formed the pride of her family: there was no festival she did not embellish with her presence; no assembly she did not grace with her enchanting talents; whether she sang at the Conservatorio, or danced at the Ridotto, or appeared at the public promenade, she was sure to attract a crowd of admirers, paying homage to her

charms. Happy the young senator who obtained the honour of her hand! more happy he whom she distinguished by a look!

It is the custom among the grandees of Venice to place Signoras destined to the marriage state, in convents; there for the space of one or two years they are instructed in the duties that sacred obligation imposes.

It appears at first rather singular that young ladies should be immur'd within the solitary cloister, in order to learn how to deport themselves in the marriage state; but the astonishment ceases when you are informed that the wisdom of the senate has banished from the convents those obscure ideas, those mysterious solemnities, those superstitious practices which characterize a religion ill understood, and that in their stead it only tolerates the exercise of a mild beneficent, and enlightened piety.

Olympia was only fourteen years of age when she entered one of those asylums. Her absence left a void in the gaieties of public life, which none other was capable of filling. It seemed that the graces and pleasures had quitted the city to take refuge in the solitude of her who had given them birth.

The festival of St. Mark, the patron and protector of the Republic, arrived; there is no authority, no political institution, which does not celebrate it with pomp; and the convents are not the last among the number. All Venice was soon informed that in the

course of this solemnity, Signora Olympia, of the Convent of Santa Trinita, would sing an anthem of her own composition, accompanied on the organ. Great was the concourse of people assembled on the occasion: in two hours the church of the Convent of Santa Trinita was filled, and at five the ceremony commenced.

After the sermon, which was scarce attended to, so great was the impatience to hear the noble songstress, a finely executed prelude on the organ announced her presence: all were silent, and every ear was rivetted with attention. Olympia sweetly touched thekeys with her harmonious fingers, and drew forth most enchanting melody; but, when her voice accompanied the sounds of the instrument, it filled the vaulted roofs of the temple with its ravishing harmony. The enthusiasm of the auditors exceeded all bounds; and, forgetting the sacredness of the place, they testified their gratification by loud and repeated plaudits.

At the appointed time the Nuns drew the curtains which concealed them from the eyes of the public, and delighted their eyes with the object that had enchanted their ears.—Olympia advanced, full of grace and dignity, and sung, without any accompaniment, a sacred hymn; but as she proceeded in the divine strain, her voice experienced a sensible alteration,—she was seized with an universal tremor, and was unable to finish. This accident was attributed to her extreme sensibil-

ity and the effect of her exertions, but her weakness was to be ascribed to a different cause.

Among the numerous and brilliant youths whose attention she attracted, she remarked a young lord whose eyes were more particularly fixed on her's.

She could not resist the emotion she felt, and it increased as she observed the same eyes constantly rivetted on her.—Love, which Olympia was as yet unacquainted with, at this moment took possession of her heart; it penetrated her soul; established its dominion, and reigned tyrant over her: an instant kindled the flames of desire in the young Signora's breast, and the most terrible of passions devoured the soul of her who was destined to become the victim of each of them.

From that time calmness and tranquillity left her; the pleasures derived from the study of the fine arts, and the exercise of her talents, became insipid to her. Wholly abandoned to her passion, and the irresistable impulse of love, Olympia forgot the duty she owed her rank: descending from the dignity of a virtuous lady to the licentiousness of a woman of intrigue, she first solicited the heart of the Cavalier who had conquered her's. He was a young Neapolitan Lord, named Laurentini, adorned with every gift of nature and of fortune, but whose principles were loose, and whose character was unsteady. This declaration of Olympia promised him an agreeable

adventure, and the conquest of her heart added one name to the list of his successes; however, as the mind of Olympia was as cultivated as her love was ardent, she failed not to make a deep impression on the heart of Laurentini.—She kept him constant for some months by the attraction of her charms, and continued her conquest by the display of her accomplishments.

But at the end of a certain period, while the passion of Olympia, increased, that of Laurentini, satiated with the delights of love, became less ardent. One day upon a frivolous pretence, he wrote her a farewell letter, and prepared to leave Venice. Olympia for the moment abandoned herself to despair, but recalling all the energies of her soul, she formed the design of retaining by force a lover who had deserted her through treachery.

She had the liberty, whenever she pleased, of going from the convent of Santa Trinita to her father's house. It was in consequence of this privilege she had managed all her interviews with Laurentini. When she had recovered the shock occasioned by her perfidious lover's letter, she repaired to the palace of Giustiniani, and having assembled the senators, her father, and her brothers, discovered her amour to them, and terminated a confession which had irritated them by words that appeased their anger.

"I am to blame," said she, "but it is not impossible for him who has been the cause

of my error to repair it. The blood of Laurentini is illustrious, and without disgrace may be allied to mine.—Though you may be ashamed at my weakness, you need not blush at my marriage. This very evening the lover of your daughter may become her noble spouse, and you may embrace a son and a brother in him whom you now regard as an enemy."

The father of Olympia applauded his daughter's plan. She accordingly wrote to Laurentini, and dissembling her thoughts, earnestly intreated him for the last time, to favour her with a visit.—Fearful less he should not consent to it, she felt composed when her lover returned for answer, he would meet her; and she waited his coming with the utmost tranquility.

It was usually in a cloister, not far from a little chapel; that these lovers held their place of meeting. Olympia had sworn that this place, which had been the witness of her frailty, should likewise witness her courage, and had determined that where she had received an injury, she should find reparation.

At ten in the evening the family of Giustiniani, accompanied by a chaplain, and conducted by Olympia, repaired to the cloister; they instantly formed their plan: but hearing the hasty step of some one approaching, they concealed their lighted torches in the chapel.

Olympia loaded her lover with the most bitter reproaches, and at the same time lav-

ished on him the most tender caresses ; then pretending she wished to retire from the damp of the evening, she persuaded him to enter the chapel, and embracing Laurentini, " My life," said she, with a most tender accent, " if you love me, as you have often sworn, why not, ere you leave me, honor me with the sacred title of wife ?—If I have granted you the favor, why not accord to me the rights of marriage? Are you wearied of an unhappy girl whose only glory was her love, and who has nothing left but her shame? O God if Laurentini rejects me, who shall protect me ?"

Laurentini protested that at his return, which would soon take place, he would hasten to fulfil the wishes of his mistress as well as his own. " If such is thy intentions," added she, " why not do it immediately ?"

Laurentini objected, " That at so late an hour it would be difficult to find a priest to unite them."

" I have provided one," exclaimed Olympia ; " you have only to consent, and the priest is ready."

" But what will your father say ?" resumed Laurentini.

" I have," added she, " revealed our loves to him, and he consents to our happiness."

The youth made no objection but preserved silence.

On a sudden Olympia made a signal ;—torches and arms glittered thro the chapel—

the family of the Gustiniani surrounded the lovers: Laurentini seized his sword, but was immediately disarmed. The father of Olympia reproached him with the seduction of his daughter;—the whole family repeated his complaints, and assured Laurentini he should not leave the chapel with any other title than that of the husband of Olympia.

Whether the Nepolitan yielded to love or fear, he only recovered from the surprise into which this unexpected scene had plunged him, to present his hand to Olympia. The chaplain advanced to the altar, and began the ceremony; joy brightened the countenance of the family of Gustiniani, but I cannot describe the horrid expression traced on the features of Olympia.

The holy minister having received the solemn engagements of the lovers, pronounced the sacred words which forever united them, and in the face of Heaven made them one; when Olympia, disengaging her hand from that of her lover, drew a poniard from beneath her robe, and plunged it in the heart of the unfortunate youth, who uttered a piercing cry, and fell upon the pavement of the sanctuary. "Receive," she exclaimed, in a lofty tone of voice, "receive the reward of thy treasons!—now haste thee to Naples, and say how a woman, an Italian, and an offended lover can revenge herself.—If thou hadst refused my hand, I should have punished thy perfidy: fear has made thee accept it, and I punish thy cowardice."

No one knew what became of Olympia during the four years that succeeded this dreadful catastrophe. It was supposed she had been secretly disposed of by the authority of Ten; when, two months after the death of her father, she appeared at Venice more beautiful than ever. As her history had hardly transpired, and but very few were acquainted with it, she was received with general acclamations. She assured every one she had been a long voyage, and she mentioned the distant regions she had traversed: but it is most probable that the high authority of her father had preserved her from the last degree of human punishment, and that she had passed the period of her absence from Venice in the state prison.

Though this adventure had no connection with the present history, yet as it materially tended to elucidate the character of Olympia, I was extremely gratified at having informed myself of it. Furnished with the knowledge of these circumstances, I presented myself at the palace of one of the inquisitors of the state.

Having obtained from Signor Rozzelino (the name of that senator) a private audience, in his cabinet, I entered into a detail of the extraordinary events I had witnessed in the Cavern of Strozzi, without omitting the slightest circumstance: I mentioned to him the accident, or rather the miracle, by which they had been revealed to me; I added to

my narrative that of the tragical history of Laurentini, and urged the necessity of promptitude and celerity in the present instance, in order to prevent Olympia sacrificing a second victim.

Rozzelino listened to me with as much gravity as attention. I carefully observed his countenance, but could not perceive that the name of the crimes of Olympia produced the slightest alteration, so difficult is it to develope the real affections of a statesman's soul through the mask with which policy covers his features.

"I return you thanks in the name of the state," said Rozzelino, when I had finished speaking, "for disclosing crimes which militate against its safety; you have preferred to the character of an infamous informer, who acts in the dark and behind the back of the person he accuses, that of a loyal denunciator, who dares the enemy of the laws to meet him face to face in the awful presence of justice.—Depart. Though the government of the Republic is armed with the necessary terrors, to maintain its authority among the great, and secure the dependence of the people, yet it knows how to esteem virtue, and appreciate good actions.—I shall this instant inform the president of the council, and I promise you an audience this evening. Good magistrates ought not to sleep when guilt is awake, nor repose when it ought to be punished. Be not alarmed at

the forms which surround the inquisition: submit to the orders of the guards who will be with you at eleven in the evening, and follow them with confidence. The sight of the sword of justice may appal the criminal, but cannot terrify the innocent man, whom it is only drawn to protect.

I left Signor Rozzelino, and retired early home. I thought I perceived a man plain in his appearance, but extremely cautious in his manner, following, and studiously endeavouring not to lose sight of me. I was by no means surprised at it; I concluded that after the secrets with which I had entrusted the government, my actions no longer depended on myself, but that the police and its spies had the disposal of them.

The dial pointed to seven minutes after eleven at night when three knocks were struck against the gate of the hotel in which I lodged, and a command to open it in the name of the Council of Ten, announced to me the arrival of the officers. They were soon at my door, which I opened with silence and respect; they were five in number. The foremost, drawing from beneath his cloak a small ebony rod with an ivory head, gently touched me with it in the name of the Most Serene Republic and dread inquisition, and made a sign for me to follow him.

We descended the staircase without meeting any one: at the bottom a gondola awaited us; we entered it, and in less than a quarter

of an hour we landed before the palace of the council: then the chief of the guards placed a bandage before my eyes; and in this manner, preceded by him and surrounded by the rest, I crossed several galleries, and at last found myself in the hall where the inquisitors were sitting.

By the silence which reigned I judged that they had not all met, and that I should only have to answer one person. In fact after a few moments, a mild but sonorous and distinct voice addressed me, and desired me to sit down.

"You were, said the voice, "this morning at the palace of the senator Rozzelino, and entrusted him with the important secret of the crimes you have witnessed. Are you desirous of changing that confidential information into a legal denunciation?"

"Yes, Signor," I answered.

"Then take the oath upon the Holy Evangelists and the crucifix, that whatever you shall say shall be the truth."

"My faith does not allow me to swear upon the image of Jesus; but if you please I will swear upon the Evangelists."

I thought I heard some voices whispering together, and I took the oath, at the same time extending my hand upon the Evangelists.

"Commence your recital," resumed the voice, "and speak sufficiently slow that the secretary may write down the principal circumstances."

I hesitated a moment, in order to collect my ideas, and deliver them with the greater precision; then raising my voice, I repeated what I had stated in the morning to Signor Rozzelino, and which the reader has been informed of.

When I had finished, the voice enquired of the secretary if his transcript of what I had said was finished, and he having answered in the affimative, began to read it. It perfectly agreed with my recital: then having asked me if I persisted in my denunciation, and having invited me to sign it, an order was given to take the bandage off my eyes.

The spectacle which at that moment struck my sight had something in it terrible and awful.

The room in which I was seated was spacious, and supported by a range of circular pillars, from the capital of which, to within three feet of the floor, hung a black drapery. Two large chandeliers, suspended by chains from the ceiling, gave glaring and mournful light, which reflected on the countenances of the Inquisitors. At the bottom of the room, under a scarlet canopy, with plumes of black and white feathers over it, was placed a a large marble figure of Christ, and beneath it was a long table, covered with a black carpet, round which were seated, upon Gothic chairs, the ten Inquisitors and the Secretary of State, clad in long gowns of black satin, embroidered with crimson. Several officers

and guards stood around them, with their wands in their hands; and I, with a guard on each side of me, was placed upon a seat at a distance from the rest, fronting the crucifix about ten paces from the table.

The Secretary presented my denunciation to me, which I signed: then the president of the Inquisitors shewing me a volume in folio, and opening the frontispiece, asked me if I recollected it.

I answered that I believed it to be the description of the Cavern of Strozzi, and that it belonged to the Dominicans of the library of St. Mark; then taking from my pocket the card on which I had transcribed the transparent words of the ninth page, and which were repeated on every thirteenth page, I read it to the Council, at the same time entreating it to verify my conjectures. I was admitted to this proof, and obtained the same confirmation as in the first instance.

After several formalities unnecessary to repeat, the Council decreed that within three days at the farthest, three of its members should repair to the island of Strozzi, accompanied by a strong guard, and that I should direct the expedition. The Council congratulated me on what it was pleased to denominate my *virtuous courage;* and ordered that until the day of justice, I should be kept as an hostage in one of the apartments of its palace, but at the same time treated with every possible degree of respect.

On the morning of the day appointed for proceeding to the island, I was desired to hold myself in readiness to depart at six in the evening. I felt the highest satisfaction, not so much at the approach of the termination of my own captivity, as because it enabled me to contribute towards the deliverance of the unfortunate Antoni, and punish his detestable enemy.

At the appointed hour two guards came to me, and conducted me to a covered bark, in which were three Inquisitors, two of their attendants, and a detachment of soldiers completely armed. The principal Inquisitor, who was Signor Rozzelino, gave his orders, and distributed masks to each of us: after which we rowed off. We were soon in sight of the island, but instead of landing on the side of Venice, where Olympia was to disembark, we doubled the bay, and landed in a small creek to the east. Though the night was very dark, and the reflection of the stars scarce pointed out our road, Signor Rozzelino would not allow us to light torches, but ordered us to observe silence, and proceed without the least noise.

When we arrived near the Cavern, I advised the Inquisitors to place ten guards at the entrance, with orders to stop and secure those who should attempt to force the passage. Having taken this precaution, we entered the Cavern: I pointed out to the Inquisitors the protecting willow which had

concealed me while I inspired the prisoner with hope and courage. At length we found ourselves before the entrance to the inner-cavern; I recollected the signal, and struck it with my dagger: the same voice immediately pronounced the watch-word *Treason!* we answered by that of *Vengeance!* (a word under the present circumstances perfectly applicable,) and the Cavern was opened to us.

Before we entered I deemed it prudent to secure those who were within; but in order to prevent the effusion of blood, I had recourse to stratagem, and with a loud voice pronounced the name of Ricardo. The gaoler, who had opened the entrance, repeated it, and the echoes of the subterraneous vault having conveyed it to Ricardo, he forthwith made his appearance. As he held a torch, the light of which reflected on us, and shewed that we were masked, the two gaolers evinced their inquietude, which increased to the highest degree of terror, when having surrounded them, we declared they were our prisoners, and ordered them to point out the dungeon of Antoni.

It was curious to behold these wretches, whose countenances had just before exhibited the features of ferocious boldness, now altered by fear, and presenting the picture of disconcerted guilt. Pale and terrified, they proceeded along the Cavern without uttering a single word; and when they were before the gate of Antoni's dungeon, Ricardo's hands

trembled in such a manner that he could scarce turn the key.

At the deplorable aspect of the wretched Antoni, fastened by a chain to an infectious carcase, and agonized with woe, the Inquisitors started back with horror. With difficulty they restrained the violent indignation with which they were transported, and it was not till after some minutes they could recover their calmness and gravity. I addressed the prisoner, and taking off my mask, "You behold," said I, "that my promise has not been made in vain: it is no longer a weak individual who interests himself in your cause—Heaven has referred it to the supreme authority—it is the Republic itself that comes to deliver you."

"Yes," continued Signor Rozzelino, unmasking himself, "you see before you the Council of Ten, represented by three of its members, appointed for the protection of innocence, and the punishment of the guilty; it will this day fulfil its two fold office:—be free Antoni,——Olympia shall now wear your chains."

Antoni could not believe either his eyes or ears.—Surprise, doubt, and sorrow were painted on his countenance.—Yielding however to the last of these sentiments, which more than any other overflowed his heart, he could only express himself by tears and gestures. Now he raised his humid eyes, and his arms oppressed with chains, towards Heaven; and now he pointed to the body of Zanetta. It

may be easily conceived none of us could remain insensible to so afflicting a scene; but one of a far different nature was passing without.

Olympia and her escort, after having landed as usual, advanced towards the Cavern; but at the instant they entered it, they were seized and secured. The name of the Inquisition, which had struck her associates dumb, had excited in that high-souled woman every sentiment of fury and every desire of revenge.—Not only her prey had escaped her at the moment she was on the point of devouring it, but she had herself fallen into the power of a dreadful tribunal, with which she was not unacquainted, and from which she could have no hope of mercy.

The guards had been previously ordered to conduct her into the presence of the Inquisitors, in the dungeon of Antoni. They forced her there, foaming with rage: her dreadful shrieks made the Cavern resound; her dishevelled hair stood an end; her bosom heaved; her eyes were inflamed, and nearly started from their sockets; and her whole counnance was hideously distorted.—Like an enraged tigress, she endeavoured to fall upon Antoni, to tear him with her hands, but she was restrained by dint of force:—despairing, she threw herself on the earth, and gave vent to the violence of her rage. In this dreadful state appeared the incomparable beauty, who had been the pride of her family, and the admiration of Venice.

Rozzelino, after having promised Antoni that the remains of Zanetta should be honourably interred, conducted him to the gondola of Olympia. I requested leave to accompany him, which was granted me. We were placed and detained as prisoners, till the result of this affair, in the Castle of Ulchria, in the Gulph of the Adriatic. Olympia, with her accomplices, were sent to the prisons of the Inquisition, and confined in dungeons.

If curiosity in the first place, and compassion afterwards, were my sentiments with regard to Antoni, and intimate acquaintance with that excellent young man inspired me with others more lasting, and worthy of him. In Antoni was united whatever was calculated to charm : on a countenance peculiarly interesting were traced all the affections of a soul attuned to sensibility :—his eyes, which grief had somewhat impaired, still sparkled with the rays of genius. It was easy to perceive that it was to these gifts of Nature he owed all his misfortunes.—He related them to me, and expressed his gratitude in the most ardent terms ; I wished to deserve it, and proffered him my friendship. A sentiment like this, when it has misfortune for its foundation, gives rise to sensations the most delightful : I hope death alone will deprive me of those sweet affections which gave birth to my attachment for Antoni.

Ten days after our entrance into the for-

tress of Ulchria, the senator Rozzelino visited us. He recommended us to wait with patience a few days longer, while the process against Olympia was preparing. The next day we each received an official citation from the Chancery of the Ten, which required us, within three days, to attend at the bar of the Council. Antoni could not behold the time approach without horror : the idea of having to appear against her who, by tearing Zanetta from him, had deprived him of what was dearer than life, almost bereft him of his senses.

On the morning of the appointed day, the Council delegated one of its officers to attend us ; and we were conducted, without any other formalities, to the gallery which communicated with the hall of its deliberations. In a quarter of an hour we were summoned ; and the Council after having received our homage, desired us to advance to our seats. We seated ourselves ; and the only alteration I remarked was, that the figure of Christ was concealed beneath a black veil. With regard to the rest, though it was broad day-light, the place was lighted by the two chandeliers, as it had been when I was before there in the night.

On our right nearly opposite the table, was a recess, the curtain of which the president withdrew, and presented to our sight the Signora Olympia, seated on a stool, and two guards on each side of her, with drawn swords. At this sight Antoni changed colour ; and

even I could not restrain my emotion at contemplating the humiliating situation of a woman whom I had before beheld in so cruel and menacing an attitude The paleness of her countenance was particularly remarkable: one might have judged, by the distorted appearance of her countenance, of the agitation of her soul. She raised her eyes, from time to time, and looked sternly now upon the tribunal, and now upon Antoni; having met mine, the singular expression of all her features at that moment shocked me, and I turned from beholding her with horror and affright.

An officer of the Council having commanded silence, the Chief of the Inquisitors addressed the rest. He traced the motives which had induced the tribunal to prosecute, in so extraordinary a manner, the Signora Giustiniani, a noble Venetian lady, and widow of Signor Carlo Laurentini. He distinctly recapitulated the crimes alledged against her; read the differentinterrogatories put to her in the course of her examination; all of which she had positively denied; stated that those interrogatories having been unproductive of any satisfactory information, the usual question was to be put to Olympia, after which the two persons at the bar (Antoni and myself) were to be heard.

The same Inquisitor then desired Antoni to retire to an adjoining room; which he having done, and the Council having ordered me to speak, I repeated my denunciation

from beginning to end. It would be impossible to describe the impression it made on Olympia: not only her features but her gestures, her whole body, expressed the sentiments of her soul:—inquietude, anxiety, grief, surprise, passion, fury, rage, and despair were successively painted throughout her whole frame; but I had scarce closed two thirds of my recital, when a settled composure chased from her countenance the clouds which had obscured it.

I finished.—Olympia was asked if she had any thing to answer. "I shall answer," said she, "when Signor Antoni is called: it is in the presence of both I shall explain myself."

Antoni was called—He was pale and dejected. The sight of him doubtless awakened in the soul of Olympia the most tender regrets; for I observed her eyes stream with tears.

I went out in my turn; and after ten minutes, during which I walked alone in a spacious Gothic hall, adorned with portraits of the Doges, I reflected upon the singularity of so uncommon an adventure, in which I formed so distinguished a part. I was then called in.

Leave was given to Olympia to speak, who thus addressed the tribunal:—"If," said she, "there existed no other means of hearing the truth from me than the dread of your tortures, you should ever remain ignorant. I know how to die, but I know not how to de-

ceive ; and while I can fall an innocent victim, I would not perish as a condemned criminal. A sentiment stronger than that of my own reputation at this moment animates me ; that sentiment, which I have before experienced, but which I believed to be extinct in my breast, impels me to disguise nothing from you. Antoni, this moment is a joyful one for you ; but you would be unworthy of your triumph if you could applaud yourself for it. You were my victim ;—contemplate me now ; you have nothing to reproach me with. It is not to the august assembly of the Ten I need recall the first adventure which conducted me before it. If, when I presented to its view the effect of those passions which swayed me, it had manifested its justice rather than its clemency, the just punishment I should have then experienced would have preserved my soul from the weight of additional guilt, my hands from a second murder, and your ears, from the painful recital of it.—May the horror with which it has inspired you, and the pain you felt at beholding the effects of my rage, expiate your culpable indulgence, and induce you to remember that it is not less dangerous to pardon a criminal, than atrocious to punish an innocent person !

" It was in this same hall, before these same senators, I appeared covered with human blood. The tears of a father whom you revered, washed the murderous stains from be-

fore your eyes.—From your mouths, accustomed to pronounce the severest decrees, I heard the sweet assurance of mercy: instead of condemning me to the scaffold, you sent me to the groves of Peschia; doubtless, that, by contemplating the beauties of nature, my soul might be purified.—The opinion of some was, that a secret execution should cut short my days; others wished to prolong it in close confinement. My family spread the report that I was gone abroad, and from motives of partiality towards my father and myself, Laurentini's death remained unrevenged.

"Though the tribunal had absolved me, my conscience had not. The blood stained shade of a lover, murdered by my hands, was incessantly before me. Remorse, like a devouring vulture, gnawed my heart.—Oh! if it were known what pain and torment attend guilt, the world would practise virtue from motives of choice and self-interest.

"More than two years had expired, during which time I had been confined within the precincts of the Castle of Peschia, wearied with grief and remorse. The effervescence of a warm climate increased that disposition I had received from Nature, and perhaps the worst of my torments was, that I was obliged to restrain those fires which consumed me. Often, while indulging my ardent reveries among the shady groves, I perceived a shepherd, seated under the shade of a beech tree, with a young village maiden. The sight fill-

ed my heart with sorrow, and my eyes with tears. I wandered alone through the thick groves, reflecting that if my cruel hand had spared my lover, I might have tasted the same pleasures as these shepherds.

"It was about this period when an old woman, who furnished the Castle with cream and cheese, requested my permission to present her niece to me, whom she intended should succeed to her business: I willingly consented; and one morning as I sat at my toilet, I saw the good Genova, followed by a young country lass, whom she told me was her relation, and begged to recommend her to my protection.—'She is a poor orphan,' said she, 'who has nothing to depend upon but her innocence and your kindness, Signora.'—I promised it to her, and the young person said she would do all in her power to merit it.

"If I was struck with the uncommon beauty, the decent, yet noble air, and the captivating graces of the niece of Genova, I was still more surprised when some days after I conversed with her: she not only expressed herself in the most polished and elegant language, but the subjects on which she spoke, evinced an understanding far above the vulgar.

"One time in particular, when I was contemplating her, whilst with her delicate fingers she was pressing the teats of a cow, and was filling a large bowl with milk less white than her own bosom, on a sudden she started

from her work, and attentively examined the milk. By the suffusion which covered her countenance, I perceived she was agitated by a secret emotion. I asked her the cause.—'Alas! she exclaimed, 'if this animal is not speedily relieved, in an hour or two at farthest she must die.'—This was no time to enquire further; but when, by a decoction of balsamic herbs, which she herself culled, she had stopped the progress of the disorder she had observed, I asked her what symptoms had discovered it to her? She answered 'That it was the livid colour and mottled streaks in the milk.—Pursuing afterwards this proposition, she entered into a chemical analysis of the nature, qualities, and properties of that liquor, the causes that might alter it, and the inductions to be drawn by that means relative to the health of the animal that had produced it.

"My astonishment and admiration increased at hearing such scientific observations from one whom I should have supposed only capable of speaking the rustic idiom of her native village. 'Explain,' said I, 'by what miracle you possess such information.—If Genova had not assured me you were her niece, I should have thought you a divinity disguised in sylvan habits:—your appearance and your knowledge would justify such an opinion.

'It is doubtless,' she replied, 'to your partiality I am indebted for the favourble comparison you have made between the little

knowledge I possess, and the extreme ignorance you have observed throughout this part of the country. Like them, Signora, I am but a plain country girl, but I have had the happiness to find in the lover who has gained my affections, a man of sense, who has instructed me.—It is to his lessons I am indebted for what knowledge I possess, as it is to his tenderness I owe the happiness I enjoy.'

"This frank confession made me desirous of learning further details. Zanetta (for I need not conceal her name) answered me without reserve; and the following is the substance of what I learned from her. She thus addressed me:—

'The venerable Chrysostome, Curate of Peschia, is an old man, equally pious and benevolent: his whole life is divided between the service of the altar, and the relief of the wretched. Incapable himself of those frailties which dishonour human nature, yet is he compassionate to those of others: he is as indulgent to his fellow-creatures as severe to himself. He regards the peasantry, whose spiritual minister he is, as his own family, and on all occasions shares his slender patrimony with them. In short, he possesses every virtue that can adorn a priest, without those defects which degrade the man. I should not think it necessary to describe his character to you, if it were not to convince you how worthy he is of that confidence which the first Lords of Italy reposed in him.

'One day a splendid carriage, drawn by a set of beautiful horses, and accompanied by a numerous and superb retinue, stopped at the parsonage-house of Peschia. A young man got out, whose countenance more distinguished him than the richness of his apparel, and proved him to be a Nobleman of the first rank. Having introduced himself to Signor Chrysostome, he remained with him above two hours; after which he returned to his carriage, and took the road to Venice, having previously bestowed on the good Curate every testimony of esteem and friendship. I have since learned what passed at this interview, and will inform you.

'At one of those assemblies which have rendered the Carnival of Venice so famous and attractive, the young Lorenzi, the only son of Prince Fiducci Cornaro, and last of one of the most noble families of the Republic, became enamoured of a young and beautiful girl, of the province of Bergama. The charms of her features and the graces of her manners were characteristic of the endowments of her mind. Lorenzi, who knew not before what love was, now felt that passion in its utmost excess.—His mistress did not discourage his addresses; she allowed him to hope, and when she left him, consented to encourage his future attentions.

'The young lover delayed not to profit by her condescension; but he found that fortune had not been so favourable as nature to

the idol of his heart. Florina, for so she was called, was the daughter of a tradesman of Bergama, who, through the recommendation of one of the officers of the senate of Venice, had obtained a situation under that assembly, and had been dead about five years. His widow had retired to the country, and lived upon the produce of her labour, which consisted in making silken fillets, with which most of the Italians confine their hair, in the same manner as the Spaniards of Andalusia. Florina assisted her mother. She seldom went out—saw no one, but lived a modest and recluse life. Once a year, in carnival time, her mother took her to the Ridotto; but as her age and infirmities did not allow her to mix in the diversions, she entrusted her daughter to one of the inferior conductors of the festival, with whom she was acquainted.

'It was thus she became acquainted with Lorenzi. Her young and inexperienced heart beat in unison with the one she had captivated: a second interview completed her defeat.

'From that time an intimate, though imprudent and disproportioned, connection was formed between them, which was the source of many a bitter regret. Lorenzi and Florina, abandoned to an amorous passion, doubted not but it would be crowned by marriage; the vanity of the mother was flattered at seeing her daughter the mistress of a grandee, and she secretl hoped she should soon call him her son in-law.

'Lorenzi had too much love not to require proofs of the same passion on the part of her he adored. Florina had too much confidence not to refuse him. Three months passed away in this manner, when she informed her mother she was herself likely to become one.

'The latter, who thought this circumstance would be the means of forwarding the marriage and happiness of her daughter, received her confession with joy, and informed Lorenzi of it; who redoubled his tenderness, and the next day proposed to his father to unite him by marriage with her to whom he was already united by love.

'But such was not the intention of the haughty Conarro. After having reproached his son with the baseness of his passion, he ordered him without delay, to break off a connection with a girl, who, though she might with propriety be his mistress, could not, without an insult to his family, become his wife.

'The grief of the young lord was inexpressible, and was augmented by the reproaches of Florina's mother. As to Florina, who loved too sincerely to be actuated by pride or interest, she endeavoured to console her lover, and to calm her mother: she succeeded, and in the midst of her misfortunes was happy; she suffered them for an adored object, and could secure his welfare by that which in the eyes of the prejudiced was her own shame.

'Six months after she gave birth to a child, the care and education of which Lorenzi entrusted to Chrysostome. Florina, as I afterwards learned, took the veil in a monastery distinguished for the severity of its regulations; and a few years after, her mother died.

'The son of Lorenzi was brought up by the curate of Peschia as his nephew, under the name of Antoni. I am nearly of his age; he was constantly at my mother's house, where I was always with him: we passed our earliest years together, and scarce ever quitted each other.

'Chrysostome was informed of our attachment. To an heart truly amiable, he added an understanding perfectly cultivated. Among the different branches of science with which he was acquainted, that of botany delighted him the most. He wished to inspire Antoni with a taste for it; but the study of the mineral chemistry engaged his attention, and he obtained a high reputation for his excellence in it. He had not however neglected the fine arts for the study of the profound and useful ones: he was equally skilled in celebrating the praises of heaven upon the majestic harp, or attuning his mandolin to the soft strains of love. To the most captivating manners he added a good character, a spotless soul, and a genius equally brilliant and solid.

'Chrysostome, who was guided in the edu-

ucation he bestowed upon Antoni by the advice of his father, who came every two or three months to see him, destined him for the church; but the son of Lorenzi had received from his father a heart which the good curate had not consulted, and he preferred the love of a young maiden to the ministry of the altar.

"That young maiden was myself:—we loved each other from the cradle as brother and sister: arrived at riper years, he gathered garlands and flowers to present to me; and now we have reached maturity, our minds, which resemble each other, have been directed towards the same objects. I owe to him the little I possess; it is to him I am indebted for desiring to learn. Love and innocence were the basis of an attachment which constituted the happiness of our early years, and which time promises to increase.

"It was thus the poor and guiltless heart of Zanetta, actuated by those virtuous and heavenly sentiments, which were her chief ornament, poured into mine the secrets of her innocent loves; but as it received them, the empoisoned leaven which fermented in it, changed and corrupted their purity. While that amiable girl was unfolding her whole soul, mine, soured by my own miseries, and jealous of her happiness, meditated the means of depriving her of him, who was the cause and object of it.

"I learned with joy that one of the scien-

U56
IEMAY10

ces cultivated by Antoni was music. This discovery presented the infallible means of establishing between him and myself a point of communication of all others least liable to suspicion ; for as every one knew my passion for music, my attentions to one distinguished in that art were the less remarkable.

" An opportunity of carrying my plan into execution soon presented itself; and as if every thing had conspired to render me more criminal, and Zanetta more unfortunate, it was herself who procured it. She came on the eve of a holiday, and asked me if I would accompany her the next morning to the parish church, where I should hear her lover sing ; I eagerly embraced the offer, and early the next day repaired to the church with Zanetta.

" As the priests and musicians entered, I endeavoured, by the description I had heard of Antoni, to discover him ; but an expressive gesture, and the sentiment of pleasure which suffused the countenance of Zanetta, better informed me of the appearance of her lover.

" Whatever ideas I had formed of this young man, I was soon convinced they fell short of what were due to him. Clad in a long and flowing robe of linen, drawn under his arms by a scarlet ribbon, and standing near a harp, the strings of which he touched with a masterly hand, he seemed an angel of heaven celebrating the glories of the most

high. My heart had too long been consumed by a passion which had no distinct object, to remain insensible at such a spectacle. Soon the soft and pathetic voice of Antoni augmented his charms and my delirium :—my senses were intoxicated, and the poison of love and desire entered my soul; I felt a devouring fever, succeeded by cold shiverings, run through my veins ; my eyes, expressive of the languor I experienced, scarce distinguished any object : I heard nought but confused sounds, and I could scarce support myself. If Zanetta had not been absorbed in the contemplation of her lover, she must have perceived the situation I was in. When we left the church, she asked me what I thought of Antoni. I concealed the sentiments with which he had inspired me, under an affected reserve, and replied that he had an agreeable voice, and I complimented her on her good taste. This insipid compliment, which I would have expressed in terms of love and adoration, seemed to surprise Zanetta ; and the poor girl left me, doubtless pursuaded I possessed a heart of marble.

" When I had returned to the castle, and was left alone, every sentiment, every affection I had experienced recurred to my imagination ; instead of listening to the dictates of prudence, and combating my passions with the arms of wisdom, I abandoned myself to its delights. The more violent was the love I felt for Antoni, the greater was my hatred

towards Zanetta. I determined, however, to spare no pains to triumph over the one, and obtain possession of the other.

" Full of this idea, I went the next day to the curate of Peschia. The venerable priest, in whose breast age had destroyed every passion, did not suppose that others could become the victims of them. He was only sensible to the pleasure of praising and hearing praised, him he called his nephew and for whom he had the tenderness of a father, considering himself as an aged oak protecting with its foliage a young and tender shrub.

" When Signor Chrysostome had heard the motive, or rather the pretence, of my visit, which was to praise his nephew, he hastened to send for him, and introduced me to him. You may imagine my joy, and at the same time my fears. Antoni sung, and accompanied on his divine harp ; but though he augmented my desires, it was impossible to increase my love.

" From that moment he came every day to the castle ; and though it was under colour of favouring me with his music, and in reality to see Zanetta rather than myself, yet the pleasure of seeing him, of speaking to him, of being near him, of expressing in passionate songs the situation of my heart, nourished the flames of that love before too violent to bear.

" A month passed in this manner, during which time I had only expressed myself by

my looks. I however heaped favours on the uncle and nephew, and for the sake of appearances extended them to Zanetta.

" One day when we were singing a beautiful cantata of Metastasio, in which the charming poet describes, with so much truth, the delirium of a soul just receiving the reward due to its passion, ' With what ardour,' I exclaimed to Antoni, ' do you express that passage!—Happy will she be who may have power to inspire you; but, alas! wretched must she be who has only the desire.'

" I know no one whom that could affect,' replied the youth; ' for it does not follow because I am not disdained by one, that I possess sufficient merit to give uneasiness to others.'

" This is neither a proper time nor place to enter into a detail of either this conversation, or others of the same nature which succeeded it; suffice it for the senate to learn that, unable to destroy that love which Antoni entertained for Zanetta, I at least formed the hope that he would not refuse mine, when an unfortunate circumstance determined our common ruin.

" One fine evening in autumn I was enjoying the fresh air in one of the walks of the park of Peschia, when my attention was excited by the sound of heavy sighs near me. I perceived the person from whom they proceeded, was only separated from me by a small grove of trees. I listened, but could

not distinguish what she said. The moon, which reflected upon the spot, afforded me an opportunity of perceiving it was Zanetta. I doubted not but her lover was the cause of her tears, and was convinced of it when I saw him slowly advancing towards the place where she was sitting. Placed in the shade, and observing them through the foliage, I lost none of their motions:—Zanetta, with her face half concealed by her hands, and her back turned towards Antoni, feigned not to observe him, while he, on his part, appeared with downcast eyes and embarrassed countenance, and seemed fearful of addressing her. Induced, however, by the sighs of his mistress, he said to her, with a trembling voice, 'Zanetta, you weep.' Zanetta, without answering, continued weeping. 'Am I no longer your friend,' said Antoni, 'that you cannot tell me the cause of your tears?'

'Who knows the cause so well as yourself?' said she; 'besides, are they the first you have seen me shed?'

'They are not the better founded on that account,' said Antoni; 'and if you had believed me, those I saw you shed a month ago would have been the last.'

'That depended on Antoni,' said Zanetta; 'and I should be less afflicted if he were less inconstant.'

'Alas!' cried the youth, 'I am not guilty; appearances only are against me.'

'Why can I not believe you?' said Zanet-

ta ; ' but your conduct forbids me. Ah, Antoni ! times are changed.'

' My heart is not,' interrupted Antoni ; ' it never shall be ;—my senses alone have been seduced. I appeal to yourself, continued he, can you think that your artless charms have less power over me than those of Olympia? No, Zanetta, that majestic beauty, who rather excites awe than love, need not give you alarm :—it is she who has cause to dread you, for you have only to appear near her to outvie her.'

" At these words, which restored peace to Zanetta, and penetrated me with grief, Antoni threw himself at her feet. The pardon of the perfidious Antoni appeared in the countenance of Zanetta, and was sealed by a tender embrace.

" By the excess of my humiliation, it was easy to conceive that of my rage. I passed the night and part of the next day a prey to contending passions. If I had yielded to the first emotions with which I was inspired, the same death had joined those whom love had already united.

" But as my revenge was more slow, I determined it should be more terrible. My pride, not less wounded than my passion had been disdained, suggested to my mind a scheme of the most execrable nature ; and I resolved to punish what I deemed an unparalleled injury by an unheard of vengeance.

" The death of my father had left me mis-

tress of a large fortune at my own disposal. In order to commit a crime, I had only to conceive one; for who is ignorant that with gold crimes may be committed with impunity? It was thus every base passion occupied my soul, and love, the most amiable of all, corrupted by the perverseness of my nature, produced the most monstrous actions.

" Antoni for several months had been engaged in writing a mineral logical history of the Cavern of Strozzi, so famous for its rare petrifactions, and which will doubtless now be more so by the horrors I have practised in it: he had made many voyages to this place, and had brought away various of its productions.—Filled with enthusiasm at his discoveries, he had often entreated me to go and admire them.

" The day but one after the grove scene, I dissembled my fiercer sentiment, and discoursing with him on different subjects, I insensibly introduced his favourite scheme, which I knew I had only to propose to have carried into execution. It was the snare I had laid for him, and he suffered himself to be taken in it.—I agreed to accompany him, but I said to him—' I am young, and you are not of an age beyond suspicion; to prevent the tongue of slander, let us take Zanetta with us. What say you Antoni?'

" This proposition embarrassed him; he feared lest the presence of his mistress should make him betray his love for her. The un-

happy youth would have been agitated still more, had he known that I was preparing to punish him for his love.

" Two days after, we took a boat ; the people who conducted it were devoted to my will, and apprized of my purpose, and we departed by break of day.

" During the passage, Antoni who had the first leaves of the work he intended to publish, upon the singularities of the Cavern of Strozzi, with him, read us the most remarkable passages of it.—Zanetta alone listened to him : she was tranquil, and the serenity of her soul suffered her to dwell with rapture on his words ; while mine, agitated by the intestine tempest which rent my heart, presented a picture of horrible and uncontroaled passions.

" We reached the island, and Antoni landed, elate with satisfaction which science imparts to those who seek it ; Zanetta with timid curiosity, and I meditating guilt.

" After having crossed the space between the sea and the Cavern, we arrived at its entrance.

" Antoni transported at the sight, began to explain the wonders of Nature which had excited his attention.—Zanetta listened attentively to him ; and I, silent and thoughtful, waited the signal of vengeance.—I heard it. —My ferocious heart leaped with joy, and I felt, by the bitterness of the gaul which flowed in my veins, that the pleasures of revenge are more delicious than those of love.

" At the firing of a pistol, which echoed through the Cavern, Antoni was startled, and Zanetta turned pale.—I answered it by another. At that moment, to the surprise of my victims, two armed men advanced toward Antoni, and before he could put himself in a posture of defence, though in fact he was unarmed, they loaded him with chains. Zanetta, half dead with terror, threw herself at my feet, and, without the power of uttering a word, bedewed them with tears. This sight which might have softened a famished tiger, redoubled my rage.—I beheld in the tears of Zanetta only fresh proofs of her love and my dishonor.—' Perfidious wretch !' I exclaimed, ' it is not with tears the fury of an enraged lover can be assuaged—it is blood I require.'

" At these words Antoni uttered a dreadful cry ; and nearly breaking his chains, rushed forward like lightning, and seized Zanetta in his arms.—' Atrocious woman !' said he, ' it is not her blood you shall shed : if you thirst for blood, behold my breast—glut yourself with mine ; but spare—oh ! spare this innocent.'

" I called to my people to separate them. Notwithstanding their entreaties, their cries, the incredible efforts they each made to prevent it, I was obeyed. Antoni exhausted, held forth his trembling hand to me—he raised his eyes, overflowing with tears ; Zanetta turned her's towards me—she made a pain-

ful effort to embrace my knees, and fell on the earth !

" Sword of justice, pierce my guilty heart! —Avenging thunder, crush me! I seized with one hand the flowing hair of my victim, and with the other, putting aside the veil which covered her bosom, I plunged my poniard to her heart !"

Here the senators who had for some time sat motionless with horror, at the recital of such horrid crimes suddenly rose from their seats, as if by a convulsive movement, and then resumed them, pale with affright. Antoni swooned ; and Olympia, stung with remorse, shuddering at the remembrance of her crimes, and the dreadful punishment that awaited her, fell into agonizing convulsions.

By order of the Tribunal she was conveyed to an adjoining apartment, and placed on a bed. Soon her features became deformed, and the livid colour of her cheeks announced that she was on the point of becoming the prey of Death.—Her bosom violently heaved ; her eyes looked with wild fury ; her lips were black and closed, and only articulated unintelligible blasphemies ; in short, after two hours of the most cruel torture, Death, by cutting the blood stained thread of her life, disappointed the scaffold of its right.—Thus perished, at the age of twenty-eight, this celebrated beauty, once possessed of whatever could constitute human felicity—powerful attractions, enchanting graces, universal talents, and every gift Heaven could bestow.

So many endowments of mind and person became, through the influence of her uncontrouled passions, the means of her destruction. Consumed by an inextinguishable desire of pleasure, she pursued its phantoms through the bloody paths of guilt ; but it was in vain : there is no happiness for the wicked ; and love, which is the image of innocence, cannot exist independent of it.

Antoni revealed to the Tribunal what he further knew of the secrets which Olympia had carried with her to the grave. We have seen that this detestable Woman was not satisfied with the murder of her rival—she had chained Antoni to Zanetta's dead body, which she had placed in a dark recess of the Cavern, under the guard of two monsters, of whom Ricardo was one; and from time to time she visited her victims, to offer him who still survived, what she called his pardon, that is to say, his liberty, provided he would espouse her.

Antoni had always rejected the offer with disdain.—He was content with giving a clue to the discovery of his situation by writing on the transparent leaves of his work, of which Olympia, as a favour, had brought him a copy ; fortunately he had with him the means of availing himself of the opportunity, as he never explored the wonders of the Cavern, without previously providing himself with the materials for writing, in order that he might treasure up his remarks. He afterwards addres-

ed, and with the consent of Olympia transmitted the book to the library of St. Mark, which abounded in treaties upon natural history.

Not to leave the reader ignorant of the least circumstance of this surprising adventure, it appeared that the very day Olympia was seized, was that which she had appointed either to obtain the consent of Antoni, or put him to death. The same individuals among whom I had introduced myself to the Cavern, who had escaped when Olympia was arrested, were discovered by means of the questions put to Ricardo, and were well known; the one as a priest, the others as bravoes, who, in case the marriage had taken place, were to have been witnesses of it, and on the contrary event, were to have procured a less pacific means of relief to the wretched Antoni.

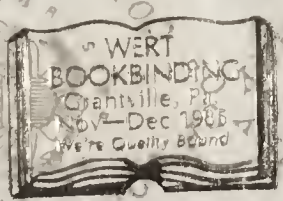
It is unnecessary to state that the most guilty of these wretches atoned by their lives for the crimes they had committed; the others were confined in dungeons, and some were sent to the gallies of the Republic.

The memory of Zanetta was publicly honoured. Antoni after having obtained the necessary assistance from the Tribunal, returned to Peschia to his old uncle, who supposed him dead. I, whom the tribunal honoured with a degree, returned thanks to God, who had employed the weak hand of a mortal to punish those secret crimes which he alone had witnessed.

FINIS.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00014646620